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[INCHBALD, Mrs. Elizabeth]

THE

WIDOW'S VOW.

Price ONE SHILLING.

M/R/A

Elizabeth S. Inchbald

THE

WIDOW'S VOW.

A

FARCE,

IN TWO ACTS,

AS IT IS ACTED

AT THE THEATRE ROYAL,

HAY-MARKET.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON, PATER-NOSTER-ROW. 1786.

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PROLOGUE,

Written by Mr. HOLCROFT,

Spoken by Mr. BANNISTER, jun.

PROLOGUES, with cauſtic touch, have often tried
To probe your ſpleen, prove knaves and fools allied;
Have twiſted words and wit ten thouſand ways,
To ſhew that theſe are moſt degenerate days!

A different taſk be ours.—We'll prove that you
Are wiſe and happy. Nay! tho' ſtrange, 'tis true!

Firſt on your *ſafety* think! now belles appear
By ample bulwarks guarded, front and rear!
Now male and female amble, ſide by ſide,
Exempt from harm, by breaſt-works fortify'd!
Here polygons defend Miſs Molly's breaſt!
There horn-works huſh the huſband's fears to reſt!
By ramparts, daily rais'd, he's freed from cares;
If he'll but grant ſufficient for repairs.

Our ſtrength thus prov'd, proceed we to diſcloſe
How new-made wealth thro' new-made channels flows!
How rich we are, in medal-ruſt and rare things!
In copper coins, gilt pence and—Queen-Anne-farthings!
How ſhells, ſtuff'd monkies, and Cremonas old,
In hand of Auctioneer, are current gold!
He "Going! going!" cries. "The hammer's up!
"This fine antique! this Roman——*caudle-cup!*"
A gem ſo rare makes connoiſſeurs turn pale,
Fearful, alike, to purchaſe or to fail!
Hope trembles, ſtarts, from lip to lip rebounds,
'Till down ſhe's knock'd by—Ah!—one thouſand pounds!
The envied purchaſer, with joy elate,
Pays for his prize by—ſelling his eſtate!

While

PROLOGUE.

While *Smirk*, in florid ſtyle, words nicely plac'd,
Proteſts theee lot does, *anner* to his taſte! *(Mimicking.)*

Yes! ſure you're happy! and ſhould reſt content,
Now landſcapes are reduced fifteen per cent:
And Claude's and Titian's new-found wonders may
By new-made Peers be bought—if new-made Peers can pay.

(Aſſuming ſorrow.)

One thing, indeed, may well your peace invade,
Pawnbrokers! threaten you to leave off trade! *(Weeps.)*

(Returning to his former chearful tone.)

All things conſidered, now, while ſafety ſmiles,
And wealth inundates thus our Queen of iſles;
While Vickery head defects ſo ſoon repairs,
And half unpeoples Greenland of her bears;
While exhibitions, galas and reviews,
Liſle-ſtreet, Vauxhall, the Abbey, Handel, Hughes,
Flutes, fiddles, trombos, double-drums, baſſoons,
Mara, the ſpeaking-figure, fiſh-balloons,
Earth-baths, live-eagles, ſuch as never flew,
L' Hercule du Roy! and General Jackoo!
While theſe create a round of ſuch delight,
Sure, we may hope, you will not frown to-night!
While farces numerous as theſe go down,
Our farce may in its turn amuſe the town;
And, ſmiling thus on Folly's vaſt career,
Sure not on us, alone, you'll be ſevere!

ADVERTISEMENT.

The AUTHOR of the WIDOW's VOW is indebted for the Plot of her Piece, and for the Plot only, to *L'Heureuſe Erreur*, a French Comedy of one Act, by M. PATRAT, but to the Excellence of the Engliſh *Performers* alone is ſhe indebted for its very flattering Succeſs.

DRAMATIS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Don Antonio,	Mr. PARSONS,
Marquis,	Mr. BANNISTER, jun.
Carlos,	Mr. R. PALMER.
Servant,	Mr. LYON.
Jerome,	Mr. EDWIN.
Counteſs,	Mrs. BATES.
Donna Iſabella,	Mrs. RILEY.
Inis	Miſs BRANGIN.
Urſula	Mrs. EDWIN.
Flora	Mrs. WELLS.

Scene a Village in Spain.

THE

WIDOW's VOW.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Hall in a Caſtle.

Enter JEROME *and* FLORA.

FLORA. I Can't go at preſent, Mr. Jerome, for I expect my Lady every moment to ring, and if I ſhould be out of the way ſhe will be angry; and as I am but new in her ſervice—

JEROME. She angry! Oh you don't know her yet — When you have been a day or two with her you'll find ſhe is never angry — She is the beſt tempered creature—and were it not for her averſion to us men, ſhe would not have a fault.

FLORA. Do you conſider that as a fault, Mr. Jerome?

JEROME. To be ſure I do—For my part, I think ſhe had much better be too fond of us, as the reſt of her ſex are.

FLORA. Pray, Mr. Jerome, what cauſed her averſion to the men?

JEROME. I'll tell you, Flora, if it wo'nt make you melancholy.

FLORA. Oh, no, Mr. Jerome—I like a melancholy ſtory—I like dearly to cry, when it is not on my own account.

JEROME. Well then—When my Lady was only fifteen ſhe fell deep in love with a fine handſome young fellow, inferior to her both in rank and fortune; but my good old Lord, her father, who doated upon her, was afraid a diſappointment might break her heart, and ſo conſented to her having him; but he proved ſo bad a huſband that my poor old Maſter ſoon died with grief.

FLORA. Poor man!

JEROME. Don't cry yet, there's ſomething worſe to come—My Lady, on this, took ſuch a diſlike to her huſband, that he died of grief too.

FLORA. Indeed, Mr. Jerome, this is very moving. *(cries.)*

JEROME. On this—

FLORA.

FLORA. I hope there is nothing worſe to come?

JEROME. On this, my Lady made a vow to ſhut herſelf up from the whole ſex.

FLORA. Well, that is more affecting than any of it.

JEROME. And ſhe immediately retired to this lonely caſtle, where, except the houſe of Donna Iſabella next door, we have not a neighbour for miles; and even there we are ſtrangers—for my part I have never ſo much as ſeen Donna Iſabella, or exchanged a word with any of the ſervants ſince they came to the place—though indeed they have not been here above eight days.

FLORA. But how long has my Lady kept this vow of avoiding all your ſex?

JEROME. Eighteen months.

FLORA. Eighteen weeks! what a time!

JEROME. Months.

FLORA. Months! ſhe has certainly loſt her ſenſes.

JEROME. Not ſhe.

FLORA. O but I am ſure ſhe muſt have loſt ſome of them.

JEROME. I tell you no.—But I muſt leave you now, Mrs. Flora, for yonder is Don Antonio, and I believe he is coming this way.

FLORA. I thought no man was admitted into the caſtle but you, Mr. Jerome?

JEROME. Yes; Don Antonio lives here—but then he is my Lady's uncle; and you know there can be no fear of her falling in love with him, as he is a relation.

FLORA. But *you* are no relation, Mr. Jerome.

JEROME. Why, as you ſay, ſhe might fall in love with me—Stranger things have happened—and to tell you the truth, ſhe does not ſeem poſitive ſhe ſhan't, for ſhe bids me keep out of her ſight as much as poſſible, for fear I ſhould put her in mind of that handſome villain that brought her to this retirement.

FLORA. Here comes the old Gentleman!

JEROME. Then I muſt go, for he'll be wanting to ſay ſomething to you—he is for ever running after all the maids—I am ſorry to leave you—I am, indeed, Flora; indeed I am—Oh it would be a happy thing for me if I could bring myſelf to care as little for the women, as my Lady does for the men. [*Exit Jerome.*

FLORA. A fine ſweetheart, truly, I have got—and if this old fright proves another, I'll be even with him.

Enter Antonio—She courteſys

ANTONIO. Hah!—what!—what is all this!—what have we here?—what have we here?—a pretty

pretty girl—a very pretty girl indeed!—My niece's new maid, I ſuppoſe—Aye, aye, I had the other ſent about her buſineſs—She muſt be like her miſtreſs forſooth, and have nothing to ſay to a man—*(going up to Flora)* My dear, come this way —I think your's is a new face—

FLORA. Yes, Sir—and I think your's is an old one.

ANTONIO. Hem—hem.—Pray what is your name?

FLORA. A very good name—and I intend never to change it for a bad one.—

ANTONIO. Look in my face—What do you bluſh for?

FLORA. For you.

ANTONIO. Come, come, no pertneſs—but let me bid you welcome to the caſtle. *(offers to ſalute her.)*

FLORA. No, indeed you ſhan't.

ANTONIO. I will bid you welcome to the caſtle. *(after a ſtruggle he ſalutes her.)*

FLORA. Upon my word, Sir, you are very rude—How would you like I ſhould ſerve *you* ſo?

ANTONIO. Do—Do—ſerve me ſo—you are very welcome.

Enter

Enter JEROME.

JEROME. Flora, there's a young woman at the gate, who ſays ſhe lives with Donna Iſabella, and wants to ſpeak to you upon ſome particular buſineſs—Can your Honor ſpare her with no inconvenience to yourſelf?

ANTONIO. Yes—Yes—ſhe may go—*(Exit Flora and Jerome)* A young woman at the gate, now do I want to bid *her* welcome to the caſtle—a maid of Donna Iſabella, our neighbour—by the bye I muſt bring about an acquaintance with Donna Iſabella and the Counteſs my niece, if I can, for I am told Iſabella is a very beautiful lady—and I ſhould like to bid *her* welcome to the caſtle—but, notwithſtanding all the pains I have taken, ever ſince ſhe has arrived, to procure a ſight of her, I have not been able—I would, however, force myſelf into the houſe, but it ſeems ſhe has a young brother, the Marquis, come down on a viſit to her within theſe three days, and he might take upon him to reſent my gallantry—and I can't ſay I am fond of reſentments, rage and hatred—no, no, the *ſofter* paſſions poſſeſs me wholly. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Chamber at DONNA ISABELLA's.

Enter ISABELLA *followed by the* MARQUIS.

MARQUIS. But my dear ſiſter, did not you ſeduce me to this melancholy ſpot, on a promiſe that you

you would procure me an introduction to the rich widow, the charming Counteſs?—Intereſt firſt prompted my wiſhes, but ſince I have beheld her, it is love.

ISABEL. Beheld her!

MARQUIS. Yes, beheld her—walking in her garden—ſitting negligently in an arbor.

ISABEL. But how?—How contrive to ſee her?—

MARQUIS. From the top of our houſe, through a teleſcope—but, my dear ſiſter, do bring us a little nearer, or I'll purchaſe a ſpeaking trumpet, and make love to her through it, though my paſſion be heard by every ſoul within a quarter of a mile.

ISABEL. I tell you I have great hopes.

MARQUIS. But why not accept of her acquaintance, and prevail on her yourſelf to ſee me?

ISABEL. I tell you again, the letters I expect from her unele at Madrid will have more weight than volumes I could ſay—She dare not diſobey him, and *muſt* ſee you.

MARQUIS. And yet I would not compel her to it—Unleſs ſhe conſents to my acquaintance freely, without being conſtrained by force, or deceived by ſtratagem, I had rather have recourſe to the top of the houſe and my teleſcope again.

ISABEL.

ISABEL. Do not let your ſcrupulous honor overcome all your future proſpects—Notwithſtanding theſe letters will ſtrongly recommend you, yet it will be with her own conſent only ſhe will yield to the recommendation.

MARQUIS. But when do you expect the letters?

ISABEL. Every inſtant—my ſervants are now gone to the Poſt-office.

MARQUIS. I'll fly and ſee if they are returned.

ISABEL. Do; for as ſoon as the letters are arrived, I would not have you loſe a moment but away, and know your fate at once—yet if ſhe will but ſee you I think with ſuch a perſon as your's, there can be little to fear.

MARQUIS. But they tell me ſhe is ſo auſtere ſince this rigid vow—ſo awful—ſhe will petrify me with a look.

ISABEL. Pſhaw—away, and ſee if the letters are come.

MARQUIS. I will, and if they are, and I gain admittance, I'm reſolved I will obtain you a huſband within a week, in return, my dear ſiſter, for your kindneſs to me. [*Exit Marquis.*

Enter INIS.

ISABEL. Well, Inis—I am impatient to hear—What ſucceſs?

INIS.

INIS. Delightful, Madam—I have been introduced to the young Counteſs—I firſt communicated the intelligence of the pretended plot forming againſt her to her waiting-woman, who was ſufficiently alarmed at it, to take me to her Lady immediately.

ISABEL. Well.

INIS. And ſo, Madam, as ſoon as I was introduced I fell a crying—I thought that was the beſt way.

ISABEL. Very well.

INIS. And then, before I diſcovered what I had to ſay, I made her promiſe not to betray me, which ſhe did moſt ſolemnly, and without the leaſt reluctance—and now, Madam, ſays I, I live ſervant with your neighbour, Donna Iſabella, a flighty Lady, who turns every thing ſerious and ſacred into ridicule; and ſhe has reſolved to make ſport of you for pretending an averſion to men, and for that purpoſe ſhe has procured recommendations for you to receive the viſits of the young Marquis her brother, but inſtead of him, ſhe purpoſes to come herſelf, diſguiſed as a man, prevail on you to conſent to be married to her, and then throw off the maſk, and make you and your vow the jeſt of the whole kingdom.

ISABEL. This is all right—go on.

INIS. On this ſhe thanked me a thouſand times for the diſcovery.

ISABEL. But did ſhe ſay ſhe would receive me?

INIS. Oh yes—ſhe has promiſed to receive you on my account, that my divulging the ſcheme may not be detected.

ISABEL. And ſhe is abſolutely reſolved to receive *me* under the title of my brother?

INIS. You may depend upon it—but how are you to proceed now?

ISABEL. Send my brother to her immediately.

INIS. Your brother!

ISABEL. Yes—The Counteſs, from what you have told her, will ſuppoſe him a woman, receive him, and conſequently ſuffer a thouſand endearing familiarities; till, charmed by the graces of his mind and perſon, ſhe ſhall love him without *knowing* it, and, when ſhe detects the impoſtor, be unable to part with him.

INIS. And if ſhe is like me, ſhe'll think it the happieſt day of her life—but have you prepared your brother how to act his part?

ISABEL. He has nothing to *act*, being the very perſon he repreſents, and therefore ſhall not know of the art by which he is introduced—for, except being a little too attentive to dreſs and etiquette, a circumſtance which, with his youthful appearance, favours our deſign, he is one of the moſt amiable young men in the world, and the leaſt idea of impoſition would ſhock his honour, and put an end to my ſcheme.

INIS.

INIS. Then he is not to know he is to be taken for a woman.

ISABEL. Certainly not—Hush, here he is, now for my credentials. *(taking out letters from her pocket.)*

Enter MARQUIS.

MARQUIS. Oh, my dear ſiſter, there are no letters arrived.

ISABEL. Yes, here they are— *(Gives a packet of letters)* my maid has juſt brought them me.

MARQUIS. O with what joy I receive them—they are all right?—There will be no miſtake I hope?—Nothing to make me appear ridiculous?—I would not appear ridiculous for the world.

ISABEL. All is right—No, no.

MARQUIS. They are addreſſed to her uncle!

ISABEL. Yes, becauſe it will be far more delicate to be introduced through his means—but there is one encloſed to her.

MARQUIS. D'ye think ſhe'll ſee me?

ISABEL. Yes; I dare ſay—There is little doubt of it.

INIS. By my dream laſt night, I'd lay my life ſhe will.

MARQUIS. Why, what did you dream?

INIS. I dreamt ſhe ordered her ſervants to drag your Lordſhip by force out of the houſe, and duck you in the great fiſh-pond for a whole hour.

MARQUIS. Is that a ſign?—

INIS. O yes—Dreams always go by contraries.

MARQUIS. (*Going, returns.*) But I know ſhe is ſo haughty and reſerved, that, *ſhould* ſhe admit me, I ſhall appear confuſed and awkward.—

INIS. So much the better—ſhe expects you'll be awkward.

MARQUIS. Expects I ſhall be awkward!

ISABEL. Pſhaw, pſhaw—Heſitate no longer with your fears, but away—you know your firſt court muſt be to the uncle, and when you have been a little time in the houſe your apprehenſions will vaniſh.—Away, away.

MARQUIS. But if ſhe ſhould not condeſcend to ſee me?

INIS. Oh, my Lord, you may depend upon it ſhe will, becauſe of my dream.

(*Exit Marquis on one ſide and Iſabella and Inis on the other.*)

SCENE

SCENE III.

The Hall in the Caſtle.

Enter FLORA *and* JEROME.

FLORA. Ha, ha, ha, ha.

JEROME. Ha, ha, ha, ha—But is all this matter of fact?

FLORA. As true as I am alive, Jerome,—I have done nothing but laugh ever ſince I heard it—But do you think, Jerome, ſhe'll be dreſt all over like a man?

JEROME. To be ſure.

FLORA. What, every thing?

JEROME. Yes—Every thing—Egad, I long to have a peep at her!

FLORA. Aye, and ſo would Antonio too, if he knew.—

JEROME. Aye, that he would—he'd be ſo fond of the young Marquis there would be no keeping him away from her—but he does not know of it, you ſay?

FLORA. No; no ſoul knows of it yet but my Lady and I, and now I have told it to you; and I am to tell it to all the ſervants as ſoon as ſhe comes, that they may not think my Lady has broken her vow, by admitting a man—Lord, I wonder how I ſhould look in men's clothes!

JEROME.

JEROME. There's the Prieſt's old great cloak, doublet, and jack-boots hanging up behind that door, if you have a mind to try, and I'll ſtep out of the way till you have put them on.

(A loud rapping at the door.)

FLORA. Here ſhe is—Here ſhe is—Oh dear—Oh dear—how aſhamed I am for her.

JEROME. And I wiſh I may die if ſo ben't I.

(Covering his eyes.)

FLORA. And yet ſomehow I long to ſee her!

(Another rapping.)

FLORA. Run, Jerome, run.

JEROME. This moment *(turning back)* but I am ſo afraid I ſhall laugh.

FLORA. O no—Don't laugh—if you do you will ſpoil all, and my Lady will never forgive you.

JEROME. Well—I won't—I won't, if I can help it—I'll look ſo—juſt ſo, if I can—as ſerious as a judge—will that do? *(looking ſerious.)*

FLORA. Yes; that will do. *(Rapping again.)*

JEROME. *(Going.)* Ha, ha, ha, ha—I can't help laughing a little though—but not before her—I'll be as ſerious as a judge before her. *(aſide)* Egad I am afraid—I am afraid I ſhall laugh.

(Exit, ſtifling a laugh.)

FLORA. Now where ſhall I run to have a peep at her?—in here. [*Exit Flora.*

Enter

Enter JEROME, *bowing before the* MARQUIS, *with his face on one ſide, as if he was afraid to look at him for fear he ſhould laugh.*

MARQUIS. Let Don Antonio know I have letters for him.

JEROME. Yes, your Honour—Lordſhip. *(Lifting up his eyes, looking at him with ſide glances, and with difficulty ſtifling a laugh.)* Your Honour, your Lordſhip—Let Don Antonio—know—you —have—letters—for—him. *(Suppreſſing a laugh.*

MARQUIS. Yes; is not that plain?

JEROME. Yes. *(ſtill ſuppreſſing a laugh.)* And he'll be very glad to wait upon your Honour.

[*Laughs right out and exit.*

MARQUIS. A ſtrange fellow this—How my heart beats!

FLORA. *(from a door.)* Oh that ſhe would but turn this way, that I might ſee her face—Oh the impudent ſlut.

Enter JEROME *with a grin on his face.*

JEROME. Noble Lord, Don Antonio will be here immediately. *(Then laughs and ſtares at him from head to foot.)* Here he is.

Enter ANTONIO.

(The Marquis bows very reſpectfully whilſt Jerome is laughing and making faces behind.)

MARQUIS.

MARQUIS. Letters, my Lord, from your brother at Madrid.

ANTONIO. Signior. *(Taking the letters.)*

MARQUIS. *(aſide while Antonio reads.)* Heavens, whence this palpitation? If ſuch are the feelings of my boſom on knowing myſelf in the ſame houſe with her, what muſt be my agitation on a nearer approach!

ANTONIO. My letters inform me it is the Marquis who does me the honour of this viſit—My Lord, your Lordſhip—

JEROME. Ha, ha, ha.

ANTONIO. What's the matter with you?

JEROME. Sir, I was only—

ANTONIO. Only what? Leave the room.

JEROME. *(Aſide.)* Well I thought the old Don would have found out a woman in any diſguiſe. [*Exit.*

ANTONIO. My Lord, you may command my ſervices and friendſhip, but I fear you will not rate them ſo highly as I could wiſh, as you muſt be debarred the acquaintance and ſociety of my niece—You are no ſtranger to the vow ſhe has taken?

MARQUIS. I am not—and yet I flatter myſelf the manner in which I am ſpoken of in theſe letters—

ANTONIO. Be certain, Sir, my niece ſhall receive them, urged with all my authority for an interview.

terview. Will your Lordſhip take a turn in the garden while I deliver them and enforce their contents?

MARQUIS. I will—and ſhould you prove ſucceſsful, Don Antonio, I ſhall ever retain the deepeſt ſenſe of the obligation. [*Exit Marquis.*

Enter the COUNTESS.

ANTONIO. Niece, I was this moment coming to you, to bring you theſe letters from your uncle at Madrid, which you will find recommend, in the ſtrongeſt manner, to your acquaintance, no other than the young Marquis our neighbour—as fine a youth as ever I ſaw.

COUNTESS. Ha, ha, ha—is he arrived?—

ANTONIO. Now in the houſe—What is the matter?—Did you hear of his intended viſit?

COUNTESS. Yes—Ha, ha, ha—how does he look?

ANTONIO. Delightfully—I don't think I ever ſaw a handſomer man.

COUNTESS. *Man!*—Ha, ha, ha, I dare ſay he looks a little awkward?

ANTONIO. Aukward! No; he is as elegant in his deportment, and as fine, as finiſhed a young fellow as ever I ſaw.

COUNTESS. *(After looking over the letter.)* Certainly, I ſhall comply with my uncle's requeſt—Let his Lordſhip be admitted.

ANTONIO. Niece, I always knew you could not keep your vow—I always knew the very firſt man that came in your way—craſh it would go directly, but let me perſuade you to break it by degrees, and not let the world ſay you made no ſtruggle firſt.

COUNTESS. Struggle! Now, my dear Uncle, with all your deep diſcernment, particularly in regard to our ſex, to ſee you at laſt impoſed upon delights me.

ANTONIO. Impoſed upon!

COUNTESS. Yes; for this ſelf-ſame Marquis is a woman.

ANTONIO. A woman!

COUNTESS. Yes; this "fine, elegant creature."

ANTONIO. That is, then, the very reaſon why I thought her ſo—"a fine creature,"—now that is intuition, inſtinct, love without knowing it—But, my dear niece, are you ſure you are right? Are you ſure you don't deceive me? Don't diſappoint me—I can't bear a diſappointment in a matter like this—I am vaſtly pleaſed, and a diſappointment might be fatal.

COUNTESS. I aſſure you again a woman—ſiſter to the Marquis—and has undertaken this ſcheme purely

purely to make love to me, and turn me into ridicule.

ANTONIO. Now I think of it again, ſhe *was* deviliſh awkward—and I believe wore her ſword on the wrong ſide.

COUNTESS. It is ſhe herſelf depend upon it.

ANTONIO. To be ſure it is—and I'll be hang'd if it did not ſtrike me to be a woman the moment I laid my eyes on her—for ſhe came up to me ſlipping and ſliding, and toſſing her head, juſt as the fine ladies do. *(Mimicks.)* Well—But what do you intend to do? I know what I intend to do.

COUNTESS. I ſhall carry on the ſcheme, and pretend to be deceived, till I turn the joke ſhe deſigns for me, on herſelf.

ANTONIO. Yes; and I intend to have *my* joke too.

COUNTESS. But you muſt keep the ſecret.

ANTONIO. I wo'nt ſay a word.

COUNTESS. Take his Lordſhip into the ſaloon, and I'll wait upon him immediately.

ANTONIO. Aye, my dear—and you need not be in a hurry—Egad, I like the joke of all things.

[*Exit.*

Enter JEROME *and* FLORA.

FLORA. Dear my Lady, have you ſeen her?

COUNTESS. Not yet.

FLORA. Well, I declare ſhe looks as like a man!

COUNTESS. I ſhall certainly laugh in her face.

JEROME. Oh no, don't laugh—Never give your mind to laughing—I did not even ſmile, but kept my countenance as ſteady—juſt thus—Did not I, Flora? Oh—'tis ſuch a weakneſs to laugh—Look juſt ſo—as I do now—

COUNTESS. I muſt away to the trial, however—come with me to the door, Flora.

JEROME. And be ſure you don't laugh—Think on me, and keep your countenance—if you can.

(Exit Counteſs and Flora on one ſide and Jerome on the other.)

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Hall in the Caſtle.

Enter FLORA.

DEAR me, what a pretty footman ſhe has brought with her!—he mademe ſuch a fine bow as I paſt—and looked ſo grand—here he is.

Enter CARLOS *and bows—She courteſies.*

FLORA. O Lord, I hope this is not a woman too! but I dare ſay it is—Lord what a pity! but I'll talk to him, and I ſhall ſoon be able to find out—and if he does not fall in love with me, I'll conclude it can't be a man. [*aſide.*

CARLOS. A very pretty girl. (*aſide.*) Your humble ſervant, my dear angel.

FLORA. Too conceited for a man: (*aſide.*)

CARLOS. May I venture, on ſo ſlight an acquaintance to proteſt to you—

FLORA.

FLORA. No—he proteſts—'tis a man. [*aſide.*

CARLOS. Permit me to aſſure you—

FLORA. Sir!

CARLOS. What thus takes up your attention?

FLORA. A doubt I have.

CARLOS. Do you entertain any doubts of me?

FLORA. Yes—Indeed I do.

CARLOS. What are they?

FLORA. I have been trying to put this bunch of ribbons into a right form for my Lady's hair, and I hardly know how.—

CARLOS. Let me try. (*She gives the ribbons.*)

FLORA. Now ſhall I ſee by the dexterity, whether it is a woman or not. [*aſide.*

CARLOS. There—I'll be hanged if I have not done it to a nicety. (*Returns the ribbons.*)

FLORA. 'Tis a woman, pſhaw.
(*Aſide and ſighing.*)

CARLOS. Now I muſt beg a kiſs for my pains.
(*Kiſſes her.*)

FLORA. No—it muſt be a man.

CARLOS. My charming—

FLORA.

FLORA. For Heaven's ſake go about your buſineſs, for here comes a fellow-ſervant of mine.

CARLOS. I am going into the grove, will you come there preſently?

FLORA. Yes—perhaps I may—only begone now.

CARLOS. But you'll come?

FLORA. Yes—I think I will.

CARLOS. I ſhall wait for you. [*Exit.*

Enter URSULA.

URSULA. So, Mrs. Flora, I give you joy of your new ſweetheart—For ſhame, for ſhame, I ſaw what paſſed.

FLORA. Lord bleſs you—it is only a woman.

URSULA. A woman!

FLORA. Aye, in mens' clothes, like the maſter, and ſo there could be no harm you know.

URSULA. I did not know the ſervant was a woman too!

FLORA. Why, I am not ſure of it—but I thought ſo when I let him kiſs me, and I thought ſo when I promiſed to meet him in the grove—and I will e'en go—for I dare ſay 'tis only a woman.

URSULA,

URSULA. Aye, now I think of it again, I am ſure it is not a man—Do you ſuppoſe a Lady in diſguiſe, would take a man-ſervant to attend her?

FLORA. Very true; and I wiſh, Urſula, you would go inſtead of me to the grove, for I am ſo buſy juſt at this time—

URSULA. And yet old Jerome ſays, and I never knew Jerome miſtaken in my life, he ſays it is a man—however, *I* am not afraid of him if it is, and I *will* go inſtead of you.

FLORA. No, Urſula—I will go after all—for if it *ſhould* prove a man, and he ſhould behave rude to you, oh! my dear Urſula, I ſhould never be happy, that I did not take it all upon myſelf.

[*Exeunt ſeparately.*

SCENE II.

A Parlour in the Caſtle.

The COUNTESS, *the* MARQUIS, *and* DON ANTONIO *diſcovered ſitting.*

ANTONIO. And ſo, my Lord, you once thought of the army—Do you think you ſhould ſtand your ground in a battle. *(Laughing to himſelf.)*

MARQUIS. Sir! *(Surprized.)*

ANTONIO. *(Aſide.)* Damn me but ſhe has a good leg.

COUNTESS.

COUNTESS. Your Lordſhip ſeems formed for the ſervice of a ſofter Deity; an occupation leſs perilous than that of war.

ANTONIO. Aye, that you do.

MARQUIS. Pardon me, Madam, the Deity you allude to, I fear may be yet more fatal, unleſs you will kindly fight on my ſide.

ANTONIO. Ha, ha, ha, I can't help laughing to think what a pretty ſoldier you would make—You look vaſtly like a ſolder to be ſure.—Ha, ha, ha,—

MARQUIS. Why not, Sir? *(Angrily.)*

ANTONIO. Nay, no offence—Damn me if I ſhould not like to command a whole regiment of you—and I would go upon ſome new atchievements—For inſtance, ſay the enemy were Hotten-tots, I would undertake to poiſon them all by the ſcent of perfumes from my army—or in caſe of a repulſe, would engage at any time to raiſe a miſt, and eſcape purſuit, only by commanding every man to ſhake his head, and diſcharge the powder.

MARQUIS. Upon my word, Sir, you are very pleaſant. *(Forcing a ſmile.)*

ANTONIO. I am very glad your Lordſhip thinks ſo.

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT. *(To Antonio.)* Sir, you are wanted by a gentleman in the parlour.

ANTONIO. Pſhaw—I'm buſy—Who is it?—*(Servant whiſpers.)* Well then I muſt come. *(Exit Servant.)* My Lord I take my leave for a minute, but I ſhall ſoon be back. *(Aſide.)* How like a man ſhe looks—Impudent huſſey, [*Exit.*

MARQUIS. Your uncle's behaviour, Madam, has ſomething in it rather extraordinary—I hope I have not in any means offended him?

COUNTESS. I can conceal my knowledge of her no longer, *(Aſide.)* Oh no, my dear, not at all.

MARQUIS. My dear! *(Aſide.)*

COUNTESS. I declare I like you ſo well—ſo much better than I expected—I can no longer treat you with cold reſerve—Come ſit down. *(They ſit.)*

MARQUIS. How kind is this! *(Drawing his chair near to her.)*

COUNTESS. *(Looking at him from head to foot.)* Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. I proteſt I can't help laughing—Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

MARQUIS. Ha, ha, ha, ha—I proteſt no more can I—Sure fate directed me to this heaven-

ly

ly ſpot, where ceremony has no ſhare in politeneſs

COUNTESS. And did you ſuppoſe I ſhould uſe any ceremony with ſuch a ſweet, ſweet fellow as you?

MARQUIS. Egad, I'll uſe no ceremony either. *(Aſide.)* Thus, on my knees, let me pour my thanks.

COUNTESS. Oh you artful creature! *(Stroking his cheek.)*

MARQUIS. Art! I diſclaim it—and ſo do you. —You are all pure nature.

COUNTESS. Well, I poſitively do think you one of the cleverest of your whole ſex.

MARQUIS. Thank you — Thank you — my deareſt creature- *(Kiſſing her hand.)*

COUNTESS. So negligent—ſo eaſy—not the leaſt awkward or embarraſſed!

MARQUIS. Egad, I think you as little embarraſſed to the full. *(Aſide.)* My dear Madam, your charming ſociety has inſpired me. *(Saluts her.)*

COUNTESS. Now, if you were really a *man*, what would you *deſerve* for that?

MARQUIS. Madam! *(Aſtoniſhed.)*

COUNTESS. I ſay, if you were *really* a man, what would you deſerve for that freedom?

MARQUIS. *Really* a man! Why?—What?—Don't I look like a man?

COUNTESS. Yes—that you do—and a ſweet pretty man—Come, come, don't be frightened—ſhake hands—I forgive you—forgive you all your impertinence—and, carry the jeſt as far as you will, I am reſolved not to be angry.

MARQUIS. I am very much obliged to you—infinitely obliged to you—I aſſure you this favour—this honour.—I don't know what to ſay—She abſolutely puts me out of countenance. *(Aſide.)*

COUNTESS. What confuſed?—Come, reſume your gaiety—Come, come—

MARQUIS. Come, come, then. *(ſeizing her.)*

Enter DON ANTONIO.

ANTONIO. Hah!—What! Struggling?

COUNTESS. Oh, Uncle, I have been ſo ill-uſed by this Gentleman, that I muſt beg you will reſent his behaviour.

MARQUIS. How!

ANTONIO. Certainly, my dear, if you *have* been uſed ill.

COUNTESS.

COUNTESS. Moſt ſcandalouſly—Frighten her a little. *(Aſide to Antonio.)*

MARQUIS. Upon my honour, Sir—

ANTONIO. Zounds, Sir, my niece is one of the moſt reſerved, prudent young women—and whoſoever offers an inſult to her, it is my place, and conſiſtent but with my honour, to reſent it.—How white ſhe looks. *(Aſide.)*

MARQUIS. Sir, I ſhall not draw my ſword before the Counteſs, and therefore I beg you will put up your's.

ANTONIO. And ſo I will, my poor Lady—I ſee it has frightened you—Here, Niece, have you any hartſhorn or drops at hand—the poor thing is terrified out of her life. Come, come, my poor little creature—Poor thing—Poor rogue. *(He goes up to ſooth him, and the Marquis gives him a blow.)*

MARQUIS. Don Antonio, this inſolence ſhall receive the correction it deſerves. *(Draws.)*

COUNTESS. She is not in earneſt, ſure. *(Aſide.)*

ANTONIO. I have received many a blow from a Lady, but never ſuch a one as this!

MARQUIS. Do you dare to call me a Lady again, Sir?

ANTONIO. A Lady, oh no—you are a tyger, a fury—

MARQUIS. I never met with ſuch uſage!—Damnation!

ANTONIO. What a profligate ſhe is! I did not think ſuch a word could come out of a woman's mouth!

MARQUIS. How, Sir!—Dare to ſay that again, and I'll nail you to the wall.

ANTONIO. *(Retreating.)* Why, what is all this about? I won't fight—I only drew my ſword to frighten you.

MARQUIS. To frighten me!—Did you think I was to be frightened?

ANTONIO. Why not? You ſee I am.

MARQUIS. Yes, I ſee, and ſcorn you for it.

COUNTESS. Why, Uncle, the tables are fairly turned upon you.

ANTONIO. Yes, Niece, and I'm much obliged to you, for your advice in the buſineſs—But you may depend upon it, I ſhall take care how I attempt to frighten one of your ſex again. *(Going.)*

MARQUIS. Come back, Sir, I inſiſt upon your coming back, and recalling what you have ſaid—

I inſiſt

I inſiſt upon your begging me pardon for your impertinent inſinuation.—

ANTONIO. What inſinuation?—That I think you a female?—I am ſure there is no offence meant in that—for, when I ſuppoſe you a woman, I ſuppoſe you what I like better than anything in the world; what I am never happy without; and what I even make myſelf poor, deſpiſed, and ridiculous, in the daily purſuit of.

MARQUIS. And pray, Sir, in what, do I appear like a woman?

ANTONIO. And pray, Sir, in what, does any of our modern coxcombs appear like a man? and yet they don't ſcruple to call themſelves men.

MARQUIS. Then you will not recall your ſentiments and beg my pardon?

ANTONIO. Beg your pardon?—No—Yes, yes—Put on your petticoats, and I'll fall at your feet as ſoon as you pleaſe.—

MARQUIS. I'll bear this no longer—Draw.

(Marquis draws.)

ANTONIO. Here Jerome, Jerome, come and defend me, where it would be a diſhonour to defend myſelf.

Enter

Enter JEROME.

ANTONIO. See, Jerome, how my life is aſſailed.

JEROME. Aye, your Honour, I always told you the women would be the death of you at laſt.

MARQUIS. You too, raſcal!—

JEROME. Well, I declare with her ſword in her hand, ſhe is as fine a creature as ever I ſaw!—Oh you audacious minx,

MARQUIS. Scoundrel—

JEROME. Sure, your Honour, ſhe muſt be the Maid of Orleans.

MARQUIS. I am no maid, Sir.

JEROME. I am ſorry for your misfortune.

MARQUIS. Don Antonio, this treatment I ſuppoſe you inflict as a juſt recompence for my preſumption in daring to hope for an alliance in your family, ſpite of the prejudice which I knew the Counteſs had conceived—I cannot deny the juſtice of the accuſation—I came into her houſe with the vain hope——

COUNTESS. By no means *vain*—I am ready to comply, be your hopes what they will.

MARQUIS.

MARQUIS. Can I believe what you ſay real?

COUNTESS. Certainly—Were you going to ſay you hoped to marry me? If you were, call the Prieſt, and we'll be married immediately.

ANTONIO. Aye, if that is what your Lordſhip wants, the Prieſt ſhall tack you together in five minutes.

MARQUIS. This ſudden conſent ſtaggers me—I was not prepared for it—one likes a little preparation before marriage as well as before death. *(Aſide.)*

COUNTESS. What! you are caſt down—alarmed—want to recant—but I won't let you—You *ſhall* marry me—I inſiſt upon it.

MARQUIS. What, directly?

COUNTESS. Yes, directly—I am in a hurry.

MARQUIS. I believe this is mere trifling—Swear you will marry me

COUNTESS. I do ſwear.

MARQUIS. You are witneſs to the oath.

ANTONIO AND JEROME. We are witneſs.

Enter SERVANT *with* DONNA ISABELLA *veiled.*

SERVANT. A Lady, Madam, who ſays ſhe is ſiſter to the Marquis.

COUNTESS. Has the Marquis more ſiſters than one?

MARQUIS. No.

ANTONIO. Then this, I ſuppoſe, is your brother?

JEROME. Aye, in womens' clothes—O dear, another fine ſight!

COUNTESS. Oh Heavens, if it is a man, take him out of the room or I ſhall faint.

MARQUIS. Siſter Iſabella, when I ſhall relate to you the ſtrange reception I have met with in this houſe, you will be amazed—but I think you will ſincerely rejoice at the final event of my viſit, when I tell you it is a ſolemn promiſe from this Lady to become my wife.

ISABEL. I give you joy moſt unfeignedly. *(Pulls off her veil.)*

COUNTESS. It is a *woman*.

ANTONIO. Aye, that it is—Madam, let me bid you welcome to the caſtle. *(Goes and ſalutes her.)*

COUNTESS. *(To the Marquis.)* Why, what are you—*(After trembling as if much terrified)* an't *you* a woman?

ISABEL. Counteſs, I knew you never would have conſented to have ſeen the Marquis, had he been introduced into the houſe as a man, therefore I formed this ſtratagem, unknown to him, thus to bring you together.

MARQUIS.